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SUBJECT: MUSEVENI BLAMES BUGANDA, OPPOSITION, AND FOREIGNERS FOR RIOTS

Ref: A. KAMPALA 01044, B. KAMPALA 01055

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a two-hour speech to Parliament on September 15, Uganda's President Museveni blamed the opposition, the Buganda Kingdom, and foreign "meddlers" for the riots that killed 24 people from 10-13 September (reftels). The President defended the actions of security forces, reinforced police directives to shoot rioters on sight, and announced a series of new legislative reforms designed to better define and limit the power of traditional Kingdoms. End Summary.

Museveni: It Ain't Me

¶2. (U) President Museveni delivered a two-hour address to Parliament on September 15, ostensibly to respond to the riots that wracked greater Kampala September 10-13 (reftels). The wide ranging and largely extemporaneous speech touched on Museveni's disdain for homosexuality, whether President Obama speaks an African language, and the history of the Buganda Kingdom. Museveni blamed the Baganda for the violence and loss of life during last week's riots. Accusing the Buganda King, or "Kabaka", of "meddling in politics", Museveni said he could not be held responsible for the "misbehavior of the traditional institutions". He then announced plans to introduce legislation to limit their influence by consolidating regional power into the central government.

¶3. (U) Museveni also blamed opposition parties, the Buganda-run Central Broadcasting System (CBS) radio, and "foreign meddlers" for the disturbances. He singled out his main political rival, Dr. Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), whom he accused of involvement in the riots. Museveni accused the Buganda Kingdom of receiving funds from unnamed "foreign agents" to fight his regime, and announced impending legislation to require traditional leaders to declare foreign sources of income.

¶4. (U) Acknowledging the economic grievances of the rioters, Museveni revealed plans to create jobs for urban youth by dedicating \$15 million for investment in various cottage industries. He described Uganda's rapidly growing population of uneducated, unemployed, and landless urban youth as a "blessing in disguise" and the beginning of an urban working class. The President also said the government would compensate those who lost property during the riots and assist relatives of those who died.

¶5. (U) Museveni defended security forces against allegations of excessive use of force and reiterated that police are authorized to shoot any rioters who attack other people or the police. This point was underlined in a September 16 briefing for foreign Ambassadors by Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Maj. Gen. Kale Kayihura. Kutesa and Kayihura stressed that security forces had shown restraint given the size of the riot, the involvement of unemployed youth and criminal classes, and evidence of prior planning by some rioters. Kayihura apologized to the diplomatic corps for the disturbance and noted that if allegations of police firing live bullets into crowds were true, there would have been many more civilian casualties (septel).

Opposition Calls for Investigation

¶16. (U) Prior to attacking FDC President Besigye in his speech, Museveni had announced earlier in the day the arrest of Democratic Party (DP) spokesperson Betty Namboozie for inciting violence. "We are going to arrest Namboozie and the rest," Museveni said while touring a police post burnt during the riots. "I know they are in hiding but we will arrest them."

¶17. (U) Speaking to the press from a local hospital where he was visiting injured riots victims, Besigye called for a government inquiry into the riots and those responsible for shooting civilians. "We want the government to institute an inquiry," said Besigye, "and to get the people involved in this heinous crime."

Buganda Won't Back Down

¶18. (U) Meanwhile, Buganda's Deputy Information Minister, Medard Ssegona, said neither Museveni's speech nor last week's riots will alter the calculations of the Kingdom. Ssegona decried attempts to hamper the King's travel within his own realm and criticized the actions of Ugandan security forces. "We expected the President to convince us instead of coercing us," said Ssegona. "What the President is doing now is a game of might as opposed to logic and reason."

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State of the Nation: Tense

¶19. (SBU) Comment: Although the rioting has stopped, tensions remain high in Kampala. Likely surprised by the sudden ferocity of last week's riots, Museveni is working to put the ethnic Baganda genie back in its bottle, both through new legislation and his usual tough rhetoric. The conflict pitting Museveni's government against the Buganda Kingdom will thus continue. The hope now is that both sides will have the wisdom to keep their fight in the political arena and not take it into the streets.

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